

Abstract 398

TITLE: The California HIV Prevention Education Technical Assistance Network: A Consultant Network Model Approach to Supporting SchoolBased HIV Prevention Education

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ISSUE: State-mandated requirements for HIV prevention education in middle and high school classrooms have created a critical statewide need for training and supporting teachers and health coordinators.

SETTING: School-based and school-linked HIV prevention education projects in California.

PROJECT: The California Department of Education provides several types of HIV prevention education support to local education agencies (LEAs), including regional training meetings, HIV positive classroom speakers, demonstration grants for special projects, and basic prevention education grants. Grantees include school districts and county offices of education in collaboration with a variety of other agencies and community-based organizations. CDE funds WestEd to operate a statewide technical assistance network to provide training and support to the grantees. WestEd organizes two annual statewide training institutes, leads an e-mail information and discussion group, and coordinates a statewide network of locallybased HIV prevention consultants. Consultants provide onsite and telephone support to 32 currently funded LEAs and assist with collection of program implementation and evaluation data. Beginning in September 1999, the technical assistance network will be expanded to reach a greater number of LEAs. LEAs interested in improving and strengthening their HIV prevention efforts will complete a program self assessment. Consultants will support these agencies in making program assessments and improvements.

RESULTS: A needs assessment of the 32 grantees conducted Spring, 1998, found two clusters of needs across most sites: evaluation support and program implementation support. Evaluation needs included instrument selection, data collection, data analysis, and training in evaluation methods. Program implementation needs included accessing research on program effectiveness, new funding opportunities, program resources, and strategies for promoting parent and community participation. During the winter and spring of 1999, consultants visited each of the 32 sites and interviewed program stakeholders to assess factors contributing to the success of the program, implementation challenges, exemplary practices, and recommendations for improvement. Crosssite trends indicate that key ingredients to the implementation success are support from the school districts, principals, teachers and the community; collaboration with outside agencies; and organized staffing design. While success factors among programs tend to be common to a large number of sites, most challenges, exemplary practices, and recommendations appear to be unique to no more than three sites. The technical assistance network is a means to respond to these unique needs and challenges.

LESSONS LEARNED: Key ingredients of the success of this support network are the collaborative process of identifying site needs, use of locallybased field consultants who understand the context of an agency's needs, facilitation of community among the grantees, and training and support provided to the consultants.

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